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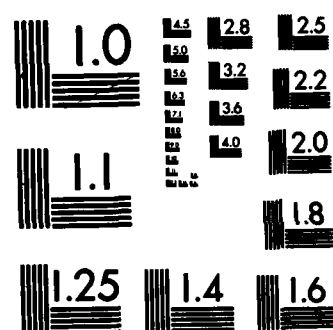
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MEDIA CONTROL IN EASTERN EUROPE: HOLDING THE TIDE ON OPPOSITION

Jane Leftwich Curry

April 1982

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DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A
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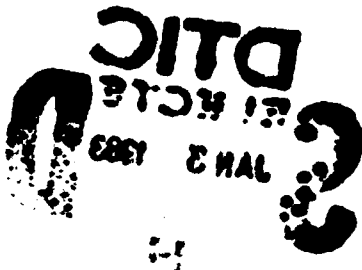
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✓ For the communist leaderships of Eastern Europe, control of the media's messages is a critical part of rule.* For the populations over which they rule, access to that media and to true and comprehensive information is equally central. For the Soviet Union, tolerance of regimes in Eastern Europe requires that they maintain a media which does not openly challenge either the primacy of the Soviet Union or the leading role of the Party. As a result, conflicts in these societies always center around access to the mass media. When control by the communist leaderships has diminished or been lost, the media transforms itself. And, when the media no longer reflect the leadership of the communist elite, liberalization has been brought to an end as a result of this and other moves away from Soviet control that the media reports.

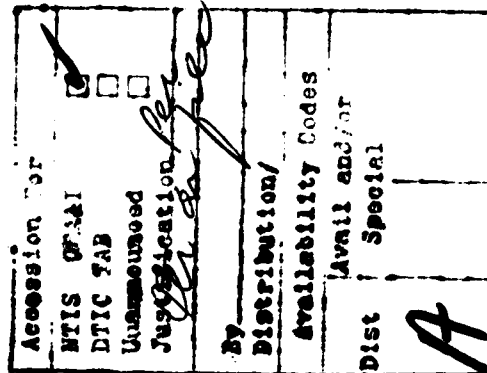
The irony of all of this, though, is that although the mechanisms of communist governance were transferred directly from the Soviet Union to the states of Eastern Europe and the same demands for media freedom crop up repeatedly during periods of liberalization, the mechanisms of media control do not vary dramatically. Each state in Eastern Europe developed its own response to the propaganda needs it had after World War II. From the beginning, the basic media production processes were comparable but the styles and instruments of direction varied from country

* To be published in Jane Leftwich Curry and Joan Dassin, All the News Not Fit to Print, Praeger Publishers, 1982.



to country. Furthermore, as leaderships changed and the relationships between the rulers and the ruled evolved, the processes of media direction and control changed in each Eastern European state.

Throughout Eastern Europe, the strongest controls grow out of the journalism work and media production. Journalists are, after all, privileged members of a society conditioned by 35 years of communist control to have a sense of the limits of discussion. As a result, most East European systems have, at least since the late sixties, relied not on the formal, prepublication censorship¹ customarily posited as a key lever of totalitarian rule, but on the inherent rewards for and pressures on journalists and editors to conform to the needs and programs of the Party leadership. Currently, only in Poland and Czechoslovakia where the inherent controls are the weakest does an institution of prepublication review exist to check on the editors' decisions. For Rumania and Yugoslavia, abolishing institutional censorship was a de-Sovietizing process which in Rumania increased the conformism of the media and, in Yugoslavia, led to greater freedom. But, in Hungary, East Germany, and Bulgaria, prepublication censorship outside the editors' offices never existed as a formal institution.²



3

ENCLOSURE

1) the initiation mode in which censorship exists to prevent errors and teach journalists the art of self-censorship since, although fearful of offending their rulers, they have not worked in a communist media system long enough to have inculcated all of its rules and regulations. Such a situation existed for most Eastern European leaderships after the communist takeovers. It currently exists in Czechoslovakia and, potentially, in post-martial law Poland -- societies where the reassertion of strict control brought with it a transformation of the journalism profession that left it run by relative newcomers unsure of themselves and uncommitted.

2) the directive mode in which Party and government directions, given explicitly through the various press committees and agencies to journalists and editors or implicitly through general Party statements and the overall political atmosphere in which journalists work, are effective enough to allow the media to be produced with no formal, external prepublication censorship. Inherent in this system is an entire system of sanctions and rewards built into the very process of journalism work. Such systems

may be run to produce a relatively open media (as in Yugoslavia and Hungary) or a very restricted media (as exists in Bulgaria, East Germany, and Rumania). The nature of the media product is dependent on the political leadership.

3) the political monitoring mode in which the normal journalistic processes and the Party and government directions are supplemented by an external censorship institution. This Office of Control monitors the media not only for inadvertent mention of "secrets" but also for political errors and for reflections of problems and issues reflected by journalists from their contacts with the population and the administrative process. Such information is used by the leadership in assessing the tenor of popular opinion over which it has less control and is more dependent than other regimes in Eastern Europe. This system has existed since 1956 in Poland where the Party leadership has been less secure than elsewhere in the communist world.

4) the revolutionary mode in which censorship, whether it is journalists' own self-censorship or formal, external censorship, ceases to exist as a result of pressure from the population and the professional community or as a result of disillusionment among the censors themselves. Such conditions existed in Poland

and Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland in 1980.

I. "Natural" Guidelines

Underlying all of the articulated institutions of direction and control in communist states are the forces of control inherent in the media production process itself. Journalists are, after all, select and privileged members of their own societies. Although lower level journalists and those with special talents who outwardly support the basic ideology of their regime must not always belong to the Communist Party, membership is expected of prominent journalists and their editors. In fact, editorial positions on all but the most marginal journals are a part of the Party's nomenklatura. This means that, not only is membership in the Party required for anyone in top journalistic posts (such as foreign correspondents and individual commentators), but individuals must also be well enough known and connected with Party leaders to get their nomination. To lose any but the lowest position in the mass media is to lose a comparatively high salary; far greater access to information than others in the society have; and special privileges for travel, vacation homes, and hard-to-get consumer goods. To lose a media position filled by nomenklatura

is essentially to be blocked from any other privileged position of employment.

As it does in the West and in Third World states, the process of producing a "story" carries with it inherent limitations. Journalists tend, because of their work schedules and pressures, to become their own community. The desire for respect from that community is a defining factor in journalists' work and their selection of subjects and approaches. Their work and their lives put them in contact with a limited number of groups in their societies: largely the "powerful" and politically involved or the weak whom they help. As a result, although they tend to be seen as enemies of the administrators they are supposed to monitor, they have little contact with the general population and have a perception of issues and answers limited by virtue of their personal perspectives.

Journalists also face limits on their access to information. These occur most often on an ad hoc basis with industrial managers or government bureaucrats keeping journalists from information that might make them and their work look bad. Although this occurs at all levels and in all systems, it is done in spite of the formal statements by government and Party officials ordering the media to

monitor the governing of society. To surmount this, journalists and editors must either use their personal prestige and contacts to get information from other sources or force information from these bureaucrats. This is costly and time-consuming. These possibilities do not exist in states like Bulgaria and Rumania. There the use of information in the media requires the approval of the institutions from which it comes.⁴

Time is another limitation on what journalists do and how far they deviate from the norm. It affects the mass media in a different way than time constraints do in the West. There is in the ideology of the communist press no sense of the necessity of quick, unbiased information. Instead, journalists' work is based on a tradition of the media as a forum for discussion and advocacy. But, since the predominant portion of journalists' earnings comes from "piecework" and not from a set salary, there is a clear incentive to make sure that everything is publishable so that time is not wasted on articles "for the drawer."⁵ This, even without the threat of sanctions, leads all those who are not in a position to guarantee publication by virtue of their connections or their reputations to avoid complex and controversial issues which are time-consuming and potentially unpublishable.

Within an editorial office, these unspoken pressures are repeated at every level. So, it is not only the individual journalist who monitors his own work as it is conceived and produced but also his department editor, the assistant editors who oversee a group of departments, and top editors. For those in higher positions, their concerns reflect not only concern about their own positions but a need to protect the journal as a whole from criticism for deviation, unpopularity, or inefficiency. This task is complicated by the fact that these three sins are often mutually exclusive: to appeal to readers, for instance, articles must be critical and special. Editors' sensitivity to the nuances of any article or topic is heightened by their greater contact with political leaders and officials in charge of propaganda. The knowledge that they gain from these contacts is radiated downwards to their staff as are the officials' concerns about the performance of the journal as a whole. All of this increases the filters and pressures on the work that journalists do.

For East European journalists and editors, there are also other far more direct incentives and sanctions than those built into basic journalism work. Both Party and government have special agencies organized to deal with the media and the presentation of

information. In addition, Party and government officials concern themselves directly with how they are covered in the media. And, since all work is ultimately "state" run, these individuals as well as Party and government press organizations have far more possibilities of influencing journalists and their lives than do comparable agencies in the West.

The major organ involved in guiding and supervising the mass media in all of these countries is the Central Committee Press Department. It and its regional subdivisions are ultimately responsible for supervising personnel selection, ideological direction, resource distribution, and all prohibitions and regulations for the media. The general pattern is for instructors in the Press Department to supervise journals and radio and television programs by meeting formally and informally with their editors; to call meetings for groups of journalists and editors to give instructions on the coverage of specific issues or events; to participate in the compilation of guidelines for the mass media's coverage; and to formally review the work of various media organs. The Press Departments are also each responsible for their Party committee's organ (the central Party paper or the regional Party papers of their districts) although the editors of these organs

are customarily members of the Central Committee or the regional organs so that, in fact, they are part of the body for which the Press Department works. In addition, through their guidance over the work of state agencies involved with the media, the Press Departments are able to determine the funding, the extent of circulation, and the aid any given organ will receive.

How actively any of these media-related activities is performed or what balance is struck between them depends on what the goals of the Press Department and the leadership it is to serve are for the media and for itself as well as what other structures exist to influence the work of journalists. For instance, in Poland during the Stalinist period, the Press Department kept in touch with editorial offices so that it knew the new, young journalists and their skills. To "test" their capabilities, it did not give them detailed instructions but made them rely on their own caution in the face of the terror which existed throughout the society. At the same time, top editorial positions were filled by individuals who were either members of the Central Committee itself or closely tied to members and got their directions from personal contacts. Under Gomulka, a leader who had very little concern with the media as a political force, the Press Department maintained

only a distant presence. It took note of positions taken in the media and reported them upwards: but, regulation occurred largely through ad hoc demands made by individual leaders and institutions. Gierek, on the other hand, regarded the media as a prime tool in his goal of forming a mobilized population. Under him, the Press Department grew from the 10 instructors' positions it had had since the takeover to 60 instructors' positions. Regional departments under regional Party organizations lost their autonomy in the move toward a total focus on national guidance. The Press Department under Gierek provided detailed instructions as to how things should be covered, what could and could not be said, and how journals would be distributed. As his era progressed, the media served less and less as a measure of public opinion simply because so little⁶ was allowed to appear. Similarly, in states without formal censorship which seek a controlled population, the Press Department is an active initiator, organizer, and controlling force. In others, the Press Department is a far looser central force relying largely on journalists' and editors' own professional socialization and their responsiveness to broad official critiques and instructions on the media and its work.

State institutions also affect the work of the mass media. Newspapers, magazines, and broadcast media are all under government administrative bureaucracies (as their counterparts in the West tend to be under publishing houses and broadcast association⁷ bureaucracies) which handle financial and administrative matters. These involve determinations of what journals should be published and in what quantities, who should be hired and for what salary, and what special allocations should be made. In the case of books, the Ministry of Culture approves book publication lists of publishers. This is declared content decision. In other cases, administrative decisions are couched as simple bureaucratic matters but seen as political actions based on the approval or disapproval of a journal's work. Under these conditions, journalists and editors are left reacting to what they imagine state reactions will be.

State institutions in all of these societies also exert "positive guidance" over the information and discussion that appears. Under various names, institutions of all kinds and at all levels have some form of "press liaison office" which puts out packaged press releases for domestic and foreign journalists; intervenes in journalists' contact with their institution

by setting up "tours" and "interviews" for journalists and, thereby, blocking unsupervised contacts; and surveys the media for references to their institution so that there can be a quick reaction to positive or negative publicity. Particularly for journalists without their own contacts or established expertise, these offices at least steer coverage under the guise of assistance if not dictating it by providing packaged and approved articles.

In other areas, state institutions exert more direct influence. Individual institutions tend to defy Party directives urging that journalists have access to information and be treated as "colleagues" by simply blocking access to information or actively trying to prevent journalists from publishing damning material. Normally, this includes direct intervention with editors or higher officials to prevent an article from going to press or to sanction a journal or editor for his decision to publish a given critique. Protesting these blocks on information and criticism is both time-consuming and personally costly for journalists and editors who are not well enough placed to counteract pressure.

Issues which are considered to affect state security (military, internal security police, and foreign affairs especially in relation to the Soviet Union) are the most directly censored areas of

information. In each of these areas, the controls are explicit. Military information, defined by the military itself to include topographical information as well as a broad range of military affairs, is checked by the military itself in Poland⁸ and, apparently, in other Soviet bloc countries. Security police matters are also carefully watched by the police. As a result, under normal circumstances, journalists are simply unable to deal in any of these areas. Foreign affairs is generally something about which journalists or editors refer to higher authorities if they have any qualms about their articles even in the most unrestricted press systems like Yugoslavia. But, in spite of the fact that on critical foreign affairs issues there are most likely to be declared and detailed instructions as to what cannot be covered or implied, on broad issues of foreign reporting, journalists have enough "play"⁹ to camouflage critiques of domestic and foreign affairs. Finally, in the area of military and foreign relations, the Soviet Union tends to take special notice. According to the reports from Poland, in the 1970s, the Soviet embassy read and reacted to a wide range of journals and sent out its own instructions for editors and censors. In earlier years, their direct contact with active journalists and editors was less explicit. The Soviet Union influenced coverage related to its perceived

interests through the granting of visas, invitations to the Soviet Union, and (in the most dramatic cases) direct inter-¹⁰vention with the Polish leadership.

The ultimate impact of these various forces is generally considered to be far broader than the specific directives that they give. Because one's livelihood and position are dependent on not violating the written regulations as well as the political climate, journalists, their editors, and their sources self-censor themselves. This occurs long before the submission of an article. It is a part of the entire journalistic process. And, because the boundaries are never completely articulated, journalists and editors are far more cautious than the regulations themselves would require.

II. Models of Intentional Controls

Ironically, even though the journalists in all of the East European states that have not undergone recent and violent upheavals have long tenures in the profession--many since the takeover period--they are not completely trusted in any country to consciously or unconsciously self-censor. In all of these systems, the Party and government have mechanisms by which they make explicit to journalists the specific requirements

of what is sought by the leadership and what is appropriate in the specific political climate. They also reward those who follow the line and sanction those who deviate from it. These tend, however, to be system specific. Ultimately though, whatever their severity and breadth, they produce a media which adheres to the desires of the domestic political leaders.

A. The Initiation Mode

By the late forties and early fifties, the communist regimes of Eastern Europe had dropped the charade of co-rule with non-communist parties. They were securing control through terror and through agitation and propaganda. To do this, they expanded the mass media system and brought in new, young journalists to replace less trustworthy prewar journalists and fill the expanding number of slots in the media. Along with this, most of the leaderships in Eastern Europe also established a separate, formal layer of professional censors to supplement the Party and state direction which was developing and the terror which guided the population's actions. These professional censors also supplemented the other controls which were initially placed on the mass media: 1) licenses for publication granted only to journals of organizations that the communist authorities

approved; 2) distribution facilities and newsprint supplies controlled by these same authorities; 3) information provided by official sources rather than from individual correspondents; and 4) "cadre safeguards," the need to have staff members approved¹¹ for work in the media.

Ironically, with the exception of Yugoslavia which instituted formal, prior censorship in 1946, formal censorship was not a part of the initial years of communist rule; as one journalist explained about Czechoslovakia during the late forties:

. . . there existed no censorship as a mechanism. You knew what you were supposed to write and when you did something which was not in line you were fired. Only later did the leadership discover it was much¹² easier to have a censorship machinery.

In the minds of many participants and observers, the installation of formal censorship was, actually, the result of the failure of¹³ the other controls. First of all, the growth of the mass media the regime needed to educate and propagandize its less than supportive population brought with it the need to rapidly expand the numbers of working journalists. There were simply

not enough ideologically and professionally skilled individuals to fill these positions. As a result, large numbers of new, unskilled, young people (largely workers and peasants) had to be quickly selected and trained. They wanted to keep their new positions but they also were not experienced enough to make accurate judgments about how appropriate their reports or commentaries were. Secondly, as the communist authorities took over the entire society, there were simply too many complex issues and events to have everything completely covered by regulations beforehand. And finally, as the administration grew in size and responsibilities, the Party leadership felt some need to have an independent monitor on its activities for both the public and themselves. Journalists and readers' letters performed this function as long as there were censors to filter out what was acceptable for public consumption and what was not.

The mechanism of censorship in this period worked much like the Soviet model since few journalists had enough information or daring to deviate from the standard line. There was generally little political censorship. Instead, censors' decisions were based primarily on the regulations and guidelines that they were given. Censors concentrated on the details in the few articles written by the staff that were published and on the general layout

of every journal. Journalists were severely sanctioned for being censored and, thus, learned quickly from their and their colleagues' errors. Censorship, thus, served as a device to teach journalists the "rules of the game." In addition, the censors' office served to a limited degree to provide the leadership with information about the state of the country that it felt would be counterproductive if it was known to the entire population.

This system existed in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia in the fifties and early sixties. Today, it exists only in post-1968 Czechoslovakia and, potentially, post-martial law Poland. In East Germany, Soviet military censorship served this purpose for a short period after the takeover. There was never a formal office of censorship in Hungary even during the brutal Stalinist period. The end to this formal censorship in all but Poland was a result of deliberate governmental decisions to codify censorship and to shift responsibility more to editors and writers themselves. In Poland, censorship collapsed under the turmoil of the mid-fifties and was rebuilt again to fit Gomulka's needs.

The reemergence of censorship of this mode in 1969 in Czechoslovakia came with the strengthening of all the other kinds of controls that had existed in the Stalinist period. It

reflected the fact that

. . . a hard core of journalists [had to be] identified and deployed simultaneously with the ouster of unreliaables. Then new people must be attracted to the profession. . . And both the old trustees and the tyros must be tempted and rewarded by lucrative salaries and specially high fees.¹⁴

The imposition of these controls and the use of salary inducements did not, however, insure that the quality of journalists' judgments was sufficient for an educated population thirty years after the takeover. The staffs were new (half of the 4000-member Journalists' Union were removed after the Prague Spring); young (28% of working journalists in 1974 were under 30 as compared to 8.6% in 1967); and untrained (only 41.8% had university education and most of those were the journalists under 30).¹⁵ As a result, a high percentage of the post-invasion media messages are not written by journalists but by Communist Party functionaries.¹⁶

Ultimately, the weaknesses of the profession and the leaders' ability to lead dictated that formal censorship had to be re-established to filter out judgmental errors by novices and

pre-1968 journalists who had, in large part, not been leading journalists or outstanding editors knowledgeable about politics from before. As in the Stalinist period, this made censorship allowed for sanctions aimed at both frightening and schooling journalists into submission. In theory, it should have been a temporary measure. In fact, it has continued to be necessary for over ten years in spite of the increased stability and material gains of the profession, a reflection of the failure of the indoctrination to take even among the agents of indoctrination.

B. The Directive Mode

This is the most pervasive model of media management in Eastern Europe. In Hungary and East Germany, this model of carefully directed self-censorship by journalists, writers, and editors has been in place since the establishment of the communist regimes after the war. In Rumania and Yugoslavia, it was a part of a deliberate leadership move to increase individual responsibility while at least appearing to liberalize. Wherever it exists, it is predicated on the existence of trustworthy journalism cadres kept within the bounds either by terror or by a broad social consensus in support of the policies of the leadership. In Bulgaria, East Germany, and Rumania where terror is an essential part of control,

the lack of formal censorship leads to a media where no risks are taken. In Hungary and Yugoslavia where a relatively high degree of acceptance of the leadership and its basic policies exists, much is left to the initiative of individual journalists and editors working with an awareness of the acceptable ideological path.

The least controlling of these systems, the Yugoslav and Hungarian ones, allow and encourage criticism on most topics in the media and in the society itself. They do not, however, give free vent to any and all discussion. The media, whatever self-management exists, is ultimately licensed and owned by the state. Offending journals can be and are closed down or hampered in their publication and circulation.¹⁷ Editorial positions are filled in Hungary with the approval of the appropriate party body.¹⁸ Yugoslav journalists and editors owe their positions to their journal's sponsoring organization and their own self-management group -- both of whom are interested in the popularity and acceptability of their journal since these factors determine its profitability.¹⁹ All of these personal and institutional concerns weigh against dramatic deviations from basic ideological tenets.

Beyond these controls inherent in any state-owned media, and normal newsroom controls, the Yugoslav and Hungarian media

are subject to government and Party agencies that control information and frequently supply prepared articles that are carefully tailored. They are also continually bombarded by advice and instructions from Party and government sources.²⁰ And, given their concern with avoiding problems, editors also contact ministers or Party officials formally and informally to check on what is appropriate coverage. According to Yugoslav sources, this²¹ occurs in daily paper offices there at least two times a day. Often too, this direction is neither conscious nor formal: as in any communist system, editors often hold political positions or are closely connected to political leaders so ideology and politics are integrated in their lives and work.

In Bulgaria, East Germany, and Rumania, media controls are far more exacting and strongly applied. No attempt is made to encourage journalists to explore facets of the society which, although unpublishable, would provide revealing information on the state of the society for the leadership. Instead, all of the "natural" guidance that occurs in these systems is imposed explicitly: training and hiring are explicitly political, regulations and prohibitions are given directly to journalists as orders, and instructions on what information and criticism are to be public²² are put out and monitored by the Party Press Department.

For journalists, most of whom have had ideological education and long years of experience, the potential sanctions for dissent are too great and the chance of achieving anything with it too small to even be considered. Ultimately, decisions are reached on the basis of information journalists receive through official channels and precedents they see set by ideologically and politically "mainline," established journals like central Party papers.²³ This is true to a lesser degree of Hungary and Yugoslavia. For instance, the practice of editorial offices in Hungary was said in a published discussion

to avoid using any really "biting" cartoon unless it deals with a generally admitted social problem. If an editorial has already been written about a certain subject or the television network has already dealt with a matter, then a cartoon is permitted about it. But, if the cartoonist himself discovers certain controversies or abuses and wants to express his disapproval, he finds himself up²⁴ against the authorities.

In the case of Ceausescu's Rumania, these inherent mechanisms and responses have been supplemented by an elaborate, codified complex of mechanisms focused on centralizing media control and making professionals control themselves and their colleagues. From far less concrete data, it appears that this basic organization exists in all "uncensored" communist media systems. On the one hand, a cultural council for "directing, guiding, and providing unified control over all cultural and educational activity in the Rumanian Socialist Republic" was formed in 1977. It was responsible for guiding publishing houses and exerting control over their output, issuing journalists' cards and publishing authorization; distributing "paper quotas to publishing houses . . . and periodicals" and exerting "control over the way this paper is utilized;" serving

as a central records office providing the editors of newspapers and periodicals, radio and TV and publishing houses with the lists prepared by ministries and other national agencies of the type of data and information which, according to the law, may not be published;

and monitoring "the way in which periodicals and other printed matter have conformed to and respected the provisions of the

Constitution, the law on state secrets, as well as other valid laws and legislative acts."⁻²⁵

On the other hand, by setting up pseudo-self-management boards at every level, a system of "mutual censorship" also was established. Individuals' careers depended on the ideological merits of the organization with which they were affiliated. So, approval for articles and coverage comes from fellow writers and workers (cum Party representatives) assigned to individual boards.²⁶ Experiences of the late seventies show that this, in a situation where the stakes are high and the rules vague, has been a far more repressive form of censorship than formal, institutionalized pre-reading by professional censors.²⁷

Control without prior censorship in all but the most democratized communist societies pre-determines authors' decisions from the very beginning of the journalistic process. Risk-taking is decreased as the possibility of censors serving as a safety net is removed. For this more restraining system to function, however, there can be no dramatic shift in or out of the profession. Instead, journalists must be socialized gradually into correct political judgments. In addition, the political leadership must be stable for, as happened in Hungary during 1956, a

battle in the leadership brings with it the transformation of the media into a political battleground that encourages the population to vocalize its discontent.²⁸ This system offers no controls whatsoever against the fragmentation of media messages when the leaderships themselves divide.

C. Political Monitoring Mode

The model of Polish media control that has existed since 1957 has been the most developed and active system of formal prepublication control in the communist bloc. At the same time, it is the product of the weakest Communist Party penetration. Its existence and strength are mandated by this failure of the Communist Party to penetrate the population and gain basic legitimacy. What it does is substitute artificial controls for journalists who have taken the controls to heart: Polish journalists have experienced periods in which they were comparatively independent. They also work in a society where the pays legal and the pays real are not even comparable. As a result, they continually see themselves not as mouthpieces of the Party but as professional reporters and critics. Because of this, censors not only have to remove information forbidden in detailed daily instructions but also make individual

political judgments on the overall tone and character of the media. Normally, these political interventions represent half of all censors' decisions.²⁹

In this system, the normal controls of the media production process and the directions of the Party and state organs are supplemented by a separate Office of Control of Press, Books, and Public Performances, nominally a state organization but actually under the Party. As in the Soviet and in the initiation model, all publications from visiting cards to books, all performances and exhibits, and all broadcasts must be approved by a censor and stamped with his number. In Poland, though, the censor becomes involved only at the final stages of production. Journals, books and broadcasts, for instance, are given to the censors when they are set in type or ready to go on the air. This allows the censor not only to read for specific violations of the regulations he receives from his superiors but also to check for general content and overall tone. It allows journalists and editors to have their articles read less closely and in the context of other articles included to "balance" the coverage. Normally, too, the censors know that questioning any journal holds up the publication process so they are restrained in their actions.³⁰

In this uniquely Polish model, the fact that censors often use their own judgment in deciding what should and should not be censored gives editors and writers the leeway to appeal their decisions. Particularly for editors who have enough political power to protect themselves from any dissatisfaction with their decisions, appeals to high ranking officials in the Main Office of Control or to their contacts in the Party hierarchy are a regular part of the editorial process. Beyond this, the Main Office of Control enters into the political process by serving as a channel for the top leadership to get information about issues raised by journalists that are considered important but not publishable. This has, according to both journalists and officials who have been interviewed, been an important factor in some policy decisions.³¹

The impact of this institutionalized censorship process is, at best, to give some sort of stable veneer to the media in Poland even during periods of factional infighting. But, because so much depends on individual censors' judgments and most of the censors' guidelines are deliberately kept from journalists and editors in order not to discourage them from researching issues, the process can be highly unpredictable. Under the Gomulka leadership, when there was little interest in the media as a tool in politics, the censors were left on their own and frequently had to make

decisions about which requests from Party leaders or organizations to follow. Censorship in this system was often unexpected but almost always appealable.

With a change of leaders and leadership policy, censorship took on an entirely different character. Gierek treated the media as his own tool to promote his interests and not to question his decisions. As a result, the Main Office became a direct agent of the Party Press Department, which initiated its regulations, sent out special directions when there was a critical issue with which to deal, and reviewed its work. In addition, all of the institutions of control were expanded.³² The result was that censorship became less unstructured and less appealable. It also ceased to function as the channel for public opinion and information it had been under Gomulka. Ultimately, this restrained the Polish media. But, the reliance on control rather than direction and self-control also left it devoid of advocacy and filled with simply passable articles.

With a censor to filter out what is unacceptable, journalists and editors could afford to generate their own ideas and worry only about how to mold them so that they would slip through. Without a censor, journalists have to depend on the leaders' guidance from the very inception of a story because

they know beforehand what is to be printed and are responsible for their work. In Poland, the profession never relinquished its desire for independence enough to be freed from prior censorship: when journals edited by leading Party figures were exempted from censorship, their articles quickly became so controversial that censorship was reinstituted after six weeks.

D. Revolutionary Mode

In every "revolutionary" situation in Eastern Europe, media management has been a cause, a target, and, initially, an easy compromise. With the exception of the workers' movement in Poland in 1980, every major period of liberalization (Hungary, 1956; Poland, 1956; and Czechoslovakia, 1968) has been preceded by a period of gradually increasing media criticism and discussion. Controversial articles appeared first in limited circulation journals and then, as a result of the precedents that were set, in mass journals. Their appearance encouraged further public questioning of the Party and its policies. They suggested to the population that the Party leadership was factionalized and paralyzed. Through the media and the discussions it facilitated, a momentum of increasingly daring demands was generated. After

each previously unprintable demand was published, another more daring one was submitted. Ultimately, these demands and the revelations that accompanied them challenged the very tenets of the system and the process was brought to an end with the re-³⁴turn of strict media control and direction.

The major liberalization spokesmen in each of these periods were the journalists who had appeared to "toe the line" and to have been properly trained in earlier years. In all of these cases, journalists took their cues initially from the Party leadership which was so factionalized that individuals sought to court journalists to improve their own positions or sought increased professional discussion to resolve difficult issues. Once journalists had responded to these pressures, though, their writings opened a "Pandora's box" of public demands for more and sharper criticism. As their positions and their work were challenged, journalists responded with even more daring articles. And, in situations where the leadership was divided and public discussion indicated that it had no authority, journalists felt themselves compelled to take positions of political leadership.

The opening through which all of this could occur was a weakening of control by the leadership. In no case was this intentional. In the Hungarian case, the leadership was divided

so that it continually sent out conflicting signals to journalists and editors. Gradually, the battling leaders protected journalists who wrote articles attacking their opponents. In this battle, too, old journalists who had been jailed and formerly taboo topics suddenly reappeared: all of this called into question the ideology journalists had been taught and told to propagate. As this occurred, journalists increasingly took it upon themselves to initiate criticism. Their internal censors disappeared as did the significance of the sanctions that the leadership had always threatened to impose.³⁵

In the case of the Polish October in 1956, a similar leadership division led to conflicting orders. There though, the leaders gave both journalists and censors conflicting orders. The result was that censors no longer felt sure that they would be supported in their decisions or that they knew what was to be said. Increasingly, the censors simply did not censor. Finally, in the fall of 1956, the censors gathered together for a stormy all-night session ending in a vote to disband themselves. Journalists were then free of any restraints except economic ones. But, because of the threat of a Soviet invasion, they organized an ad hoc committee of journalists and government officials to review the media and suggest to those who had become too daring that they tone down their work.³⁶

In the Czech case, censorship had been revised and toned down in 1966 in an attempt by the authorities to court favor with the intellectual community by appearing to limit censorship. In point of fact, the new Press Law was vague enough to have allowed for any level of control had the leadership of the Party not been seriously divided. Much like their colleagues in Poland and Hungary, journalists were initially "liberated" by their involvement in internal Party battles and then became critical actors on their own. Censorship simply ceased to function in late 1967. But, unlike their Polish predecessors, journalists did not seek the protection of a review board. They continued on in their criticism and their voicing of proposals.³⁷

The case of Poland in 1980 and 1981 is significantly different from the movements which preceded it. Up until the granting of the Gdansk workers' demands (of which one of the top three was free access to the media and information),³⁸ the Gierek leadership was not visibly divided and kept a tight hold on the mass media. As a result, there were programmatic discussions to preface the changes. Platforms grew up in reaction to workers' demands and their gains. The censorship which Gierek had built up continued to function, following orders to be more or less liberal from its Press Department instructors.³⁹ Because there was a general

agreement that the total abolition of censorship was not feasible, the battles over the media centered around access by the Solidarity union to its own media and to television time as well as the codification of strict and detailed limits on censorship. On the issue of legalizing censorship, the leadership came to a compromise after nearly a year of negotiation. On the issue of access, there was⁴⁰ never an agreement for Solidarity's use of the broadcast media.

In all four of these cases, the loss of control over the mass media was a major concern for the Soviet Union. According to their own statements on Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, the freedom of the media was a major cause for their actions. When they invaded Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the mass media was a prime target of attack. In Poland in 1956, Gomulka was told by Khrushchev, as he reported to representatives of the journalists called to speak to him, that continued escalation of media freedom would necessitate a Soviet intervention.⁴¹ In Poland in 1981, one of the primary actions of the martial law regime was to close down all but two journals, impose total censorship, and force journalists to undergo⁴² "political verification" and sign loyalty oaths. In all of these cases, the new media freedoms were quickly reduced to levels comparable to early periods of Stalinist repression. And, in all

but the Polish case of 1956, there was a major turnover in the journalism cadres to bring in new, untainted blood. This, of course, necessitated a return to initiation censorship.

III. The Targets of Control

What is censored is evidence of both the posture and fears of the regimes in Eastern Europe. Most often, there is either no clear articulation of what is publishable or the regulations are kept strictly secret. As a result, what journals and subjects are controlled is visible only in the voids which appear.

Under normal circumstances, little needs to be said explicitly. Journalists and editors are conscious of the structures of the societies in which they live. They also have the personal and professional connections that allow them to anticipate political shifts in their writings. The desire to maintain their positions insures their self-restraint unless they know the Party leadership is fragmented and no authority exists to control them. At these times they test the limits ("The Soviet factor, the Party dictatorship and personalities") first in limited circulation intellectual journals that are always the most independent. Then similar criticism spills into more mass and more closely controlled media.

In stable times, detailed regulations do exist on what information can and cannot be published. There is only one set of these regulations available in the West. These 700 pages of the Polish censors' internal instructions and reports from 1974-76 provided individual censors with explicit prohibitions and instructions for information ranging from negative mention of the Shah of Iran and his entourage to information on factory and children's camp accidents.⁴³ This evidence from Poland indicates that the targets at least of explicit censorship are not national security issues but images of domestic realities: For example, in the first two weeks of May, 1974, 45.9% of the interventions involved social issues, 14.6% economic issues, 11.9% culture and history, 6.2% religion and only 12.4% "protection of the state."⁴⁴

These same regulations are more detailed than those apparently⁴⁵ required in other systems. However, in substance they represent the kinds of controls found elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Censorship prohibitions are not consistent: some organs are deliberately allowed to be more critical than others on subjects of special interest to their readers. As a result, there is an inverse relationship between the extent of criticism allowed in an organ and its audience. In addition, it is clear that

no prohibitions must be issued to keep questions of the legitimacy of communist rule from being raised. Journalists and editors simply do not try to publish such things. In less significant areas, though, prohibitions are not permanent. Rather, regulations are often valid for only a limited period of time and are then removed.⁴⁶ After this, the criticism or information is allowed although it is usually no longer timely.

IV. Media Management and Political Control

The orchestration of the media is far more than simply an element of government organization. It is a critical factor in political life in these societies. The character of media direction and control is a reflection of individual leaderships' perceptions of their positions and the critical issues for their societies. It is also a product of their cohesion and ability to lead. At the same time, the orchestration affects the relationships of the leaders to each other and to their populations. Finally, for the population and journalism professionals, media control and direction are critical political issues themselves.

Media control in Eastern Europe was originally necessitated by the low level of support for the communist takeovers.⁴⁷ Once the communist regimes moved to rule and not just control the basic

levers of power, they tried to actively transform their societies. For this, the media was the primary channel for instructing and threatening the population as well as the major instrument for promising improvements. To do these things, the communist leaders felt there could only be a single line presented to the population so that no questions would be raised. This required direction as well as control because of the disparity the images allowed, the promises made, and the reality lived.⁴⁸

This imperative continues today. It is not, therefore, surprising that the two countries in which the media are the most critical and informative (Hungary and Yugoslavia) are also the countries with the most reformed and viable economies narrowing the gap between expectations and reality. The countries where special institutional structures are required to control the mass media (Czechoslovakia, Poland and Rumania) are, conversely, the countries with the largest gaps between what the population expects and what exists. On a narrower scale, this same relationship holds: the least information and criticism appears on subjects and in areas where the regimes are the most committed and sensitive about their failures. So, for instance, as the economies declined in Poland and Rumania during the seventies, economic information and discussion virtually disappeared.⁴⁹ Only the massive Polish

workers' revolts in August, 1980, with their focus on the demand for free information on Poland's situation forced the Polish communist leadership to reveal the failings of the past and allow unorchestrated discussion of the future.

The inability of the media to accurately mirror reality and the directives that it must create a positive image of society ultimately only serve the interests of the Soviet Union. When the media has reflected the real problems in the society, it has, inevitably, made veiled or direct critiques of communism and Soviet dominance. This threatens the image and invincibility the Soviet elite has tried to maintain for itself. It also involves the exposure of information about East European societies, economies, and their relations to the Soviet Union as well as internal information about the Soviet Union that Soviet leaders do not want presented to the West or to their own populations. Thus, any deviation from a restrained media brings with it veiled or direct criticism from the Soviet Union and ultimately a forced end to the critical East European discussions.

For the East European leaderships, the comfort of being presented positively in the media carries with it the underlying risk of losing touch with society. And, at the same time, when these positive images do not reflect reality, they erode the

political elite's authority. So, although the leaders themselves seldom rely on the media for information on domestic or foreign affairs,⁵⁰ they depend on journalists for accurate information on administration and on public attitudes. Over the years, however, the limits on what can be public discouraged journalists from exploring or reporting problems when they knew they would not be published. As a result, that link between the population and the rulers dries up and top leaders become increasingly dependent on the bureaucrats around them to report their own failings. In the end, the only images these leaders receive are those they have ordered. This leaves them to make decisions on the basis of skewed information.⁵¹

This enforced unreality does not, as they intended, increase the authority of the leaders and their policies. Instead, when the leadership insists on a positive image being presented even in bad times, its authority is diminished. Readers come to depend not on their domestic media but on gossip and Western broadcasts.⁵² They use domestic media for information but, according to surveys done during periods of liberalization, they assume that the media is not completely truthful.⁵³ By extension, since most of their contacts with political leaders come through the mass media, they also assume that their leaders

do not tell the truth. All of this leaves those leaders who demand positive media images in the face of serious problems in their societies with none of the authority that they sought to insure by media control.

Equally as important, the controls and direction on the media block professionals and specialists from engaging in discussions as to the direction of policy. Not only do they not have access to basic information required to make decisions but they also do not know what other groups of professionals or specialists are saying on any given issue. Ultimately, discussions can only occur among limited groups who are usually in the same field or of the same political persuasion. This limits the quality of the discussions. The forced reliance on private channels for intellectual discussion also leaves workers with no sense of the intellectuals as a group generating new ideas, as a group that could provide some viable alternative bases of leadership. So, only when media controls break down before workers' actions do intellectual discussions provide a framework for broader social discussions because they are able to be published. But, in the Polish case where the media remained tightly controlled until after the workers' strikes, intellectuals were never fully trusted as leaders. This left the movement without a clearly agreed upon platform.

Finally, in addition to all of its negative effects on the process of effective governance, the control and direction of the mass media, when it leads to a misrepresentation of reality, is an irritant for the population itself. One of the first demands made by all social groups in any period of liberalization is for the mass media to be free to provide more accurate information and critical discussion. And, as was particularly clear in the Polish case, this involves not only reduced blocks on media coverage but also increased access for a variety of groups in the society.

The ultimate irony of the various forms of media direction and control in Eastern Europe is they simply have not worked. Public opinion has been created not by carefully orchestrated media images but by the realities of everyday life. As readers and viewers have been educated in these communist systems, they have grown more aware of the gaps between the media messages and reality. This has made them more dissatisfied with their leaders and reduced the authority of those leaders. In societies where reality and media messages are consistent because leadership policies have been successful, control and directions are tolerable. And, the leadership is willing to allow relatively open

discussion. But, in other societies where reality is less presentable, direction and control of the media has merely served to increase the division between the leaders and the led. And, when that leadership is internally weak, it serves to spark discontent.

FOOTNOTES

1. Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 9-10.

2. On this and other details of media control and censorship, comparable and reliable information is not available for all of the East European states. This is, in part, a product of the prohibitions in these systems against any open discussion of censorship. It is also a direct result of Western research on the mass media and its controls. This article uses detailed research on Poland done by the author and Dr. A. Ross Johnson of The Rand Corporation; interviews with current and émigré journalists from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany; the censors' documents brought out of Poland in 1977; available Western research on the other states; and East European statements and legal documents as well as scholarly and autobiographical articles published in the West.

3. J. L. Curry, The Professionalization of Polish Journalists and Their Role in the Policy Process, Chapter III (unpublished manuscript).

4. Interview data, 1980.

5. Interview data, 1975-76. (In most cases, half of the journalists' salaries come from "piecework rates" for work beyond

the minimum required from journalists.)

6. Poland Today (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1981), pp. 53-54

7. See, for example, discussions of media making in the West, John W.C. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski, William W. Bowman, The News People (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1976); David R. Bowers, "A Report on Activity by Publishers in Directing Newsroom Decisions," Journalism Quarterly, 44 (Spring, 1967); David L. Grey, "Decision-Making by a Reporter Under Deadline Pressure," Journalism Quarterly, 43 (Autumn, 1966); and Ben Bagdikian, "Shaping Media Content: Professional Personnel and Organizational Structure," Public Opinion Quarterly, 36, No. 4 (Winter, 1973-74), pp. 569-579.

8. Interview data, 1979-80. J.L. Curry, The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in Poland: The System of Censorship, Rand Corporation Note N-1514/2 (December, 1980), p. 22-23.

9. Interview data, 1975-76.

10. Interview data, 1979.

11. "The Fourth Day: Afternoon," in The Czechoslovak Reform Movement (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1973), pp. 237-238.

12. Ibid., 291.

13. Ibid., 237.

14. V. Kusin, From Dubcek to Charter 77 (New York: St. Martin, 1977), p. 100. Other aspects of the "normalization" of the Czech media included

new staffing of party-supervised media. . .
closure of newspapers by governmental
decree, dispersal of defiant party branches
in editorial offices, disbandment of sections
of the Journalists' Union and takeover of the
Union's Central Committee by a handful of
trusted lieutenants, and even some arrests.

15. "Improvement of Journalistic Standards Urged," Radio Free Europe Research Report, Czechoslovakia/29 (July 23, 1975), p. 2.

16. Kusin. Czechoslovak Reform Movement, p. 257.

17. Paul Lendvai, The Bureaucracy of Truth (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981), p. 51.

18. Interview data, 1981.

19. Gertrude Joch Robinson, Tito's Maverick Media (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 27.

20. Ibid., 148.

21. Ibid., 149.

22. Dimitor Bochev, "Orfografiia i Orfoepos, ili vseobshchaia vina i anonimuyi vinovnik" (unpublished manuscript); "DieFrage der Zensur in der DDR. Eine Erklarung des Schriftstellers Heym", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (April 26, 1979); Paul Goma, "The Rumanian Labyrinth," Index on Censhorship, 7 (November-December, 1978), pp. 41-43; and "Additional Information on the Rumanian Censorship System," Radio Free Europe Situation Report, Rumania/1 (January 19, 1978), p. 22.
23. Interview data, 1981.
24. "Hungarian Cartoonists Satirize Censorship", Radio Free Europe Situation Report, Hungary/22 (June 23, 1976), p. 7.
25. Rumanian Situation Report/1, p. 23 and "Amended Law on Press Activity Published", Foreign Broadcast Information Service (February 15, 1978), pp. 62-80.
26. Goma, p. 43.
27. Ibid.
28. Paul Zinner, Revolution in Hungary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 189-194 and 273-274.
29. For a more complete discussion of the censorship process in Poland see the author's monograph, "The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in Poland: The System of Censorship", Rand Note N-1514/2 (December 1980) and The Black Book of Polish Censorship (unpublished manuscript by J.L. Curry).

30. Ibid.
31. Interview data, 1975-76 and 1979.
32. Interview data, 1979.
33. Michal Radgowski, "Czterdziu cy o 'Polityce': Miedzy Biegunami", Polityka (August 25, 1979), p. 3.
34. See, for example, the collections of documents from Hungary and Czechoslovakia: Paul Zinner, National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956) and Robin Remington, Winter in Prague (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969).
35. Interview data, 1979.
36. Ibid.
37. Frank I. Kaplan, Winter Into Spring: The Czechoslovak Press and the Reform Movement (Boulder, Colorado: East European Quarterly, 1977).
38. Radio Free Europe, August 1980: The Strikes in Poland (October, 1980), p. 223.
39. Dariusz Fikus, "Niech Kazdy Mowi, oo ma na sercu," Prasa Polska (February-March, 1981), p. 7.
40. A censorship law was agreed upon August 21, 1981, after nearly a year of negotiations /"Ustawy o kontroli Publikacji i Widowisk" Zycie i Nowosci (August 21, 1981), p. 4.7
The issue of access continued to bedevil the negotiations between

Solidarity and the government right up to the declaration of martial law. Solidarity regularly demanded access to television time in which they could produce their own programs. Because they were not able to get this access and they did not agree with the coverage they were receiving, they blocked Polish television from covering their convention in August and September, 1981.

41. Stenogram, Zjazd Krajowy S.D..P., 1956.

42. "Martial Law: A Chronology of Events", Radio Free Europe Situation Reports, Poland/1 (January 22, 1982), p. 2.

43. Lendvai, p. 118 as well as the English translation of the entire set of documents, Black Book of Polish Censorship.

44. Ibid., p. 115.

45. In other systems, much of this is unstated. But, for instance, in Rumania there is a detailed test of prohibitions -- all vague enough to allow almost anything to be sanctionable -- in Section II of Rumanian Press Law (F.B.I.S., February 15, 1978). In East Germany and Bulgaria, when critical and difficult situations arise, domestically or internationally, instructions are cabled out to editors. In Yugoslav law, there is also a general listing of forbidden topics.

46. Black Book of Polish Censorship.

47. Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 3-22.

48. Ibid.

49. Interview data, 1979. See also the economic prohibitions listed in The Black Book of Polish Censorship and Poland Today, p. 53 and pp. 159-166.

50. J.L. Curry, The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in Poland: The Role of "Special Bulletins", Rand Corporation Note N-1514/4 (December 1980).

51. Interviewers said, for instance, that, in the Polish case, Gomulka by 1968 was dependent on an essentially one-page press summary prepared for him by an aide who supported an opposing faction.

52. Lendvai, pp. 158-160.

53. Jaroslaw Piekalkiewicz, Public Opinion Polling in Czechoslovakia (New York: Praeger, 1972) and unpublished research by the Center for Public Opinion Research of Polish Radio and Television showing that only 23% thought Polish television presented factual information about the actual situation in Poland.

54. One example of this is the initiative forming a discussion group (Experience and the Future of Poland) to share information and opinion among groups of intellectuals. Even this was limited almost completely to Warsaw-based intellectuals.

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